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ABSTRACT

Bibliotherapy is defined as "a process of dynamic interaction between the reader and literature--interaction which may be utilized for personality assessment, adjustment, and growth." A review of the literature dealing with bibliotherapy and a discussion of its uses are contained in this paper. The review indicates that bibliotherapy, if properly and carefully used with any age level, is likely to produce a positive change in the reader's attitudes and self-concept. It is particularly effective if a large variety of books at different reading levels and appealing to the interests and needs of the readers is provided. There should be freedom of book selection and no pressure for reading. Furthermore, it is suggested that reading be followed by discussion to facilitate the interaction between the reader and the character(s) in the book, which is essential for the therapeutic process. (LL)

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BIBLIOTHERAPY: A BRIEF REVIEW

Bibliotherapy literally means "treatment through books". In their review of literature, Russell and Shrodes (27) define bibliotherapy as "a process of dynamic interaction between the reader and literature -- interaction which may be utilized for personality assessment, adjustment, and growth". Literature in this definition is synonymous with books.

The value of books for shaping character and behavior of the reader has been recognized for centuries. The Greeks believed that books could heal the soul. In tracing the history of bibliotherapy Weingarten (37) mentions that the inscription on the library of Alexandria, which was founded about 300 B.C. was "The Nourishment of the Soul" or translated otherwise "The Medicine of the Mind". Although books have been used since ancient times interest in the process of bibliotherapy and its effects on personality growth and mental adjustment is of recent origin.

The process of bibliotherapy, according to Russell and Shrodes (27) consists of identification, catharsis, and insight which are defined as follows:

> Identification is the real or imagined affiliation of one's self with a character in the story read. It may agument self esteem if the character is admired or increase feeling of belonging by reducing the sense of difference from others.
>
> Catharsis is the release of tension experienced by the reader as he identifies himself with a character in the story and shares his motivation and conflict.

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Insight is the ability to achieve and awareness of one's own motivation and needs of finding solutions to one's problems through identification.

In order to make the process of bibliotherapy more effective some considerations about children's interests, freedom of book selection, and an opportunity to clarify one's thinking and feelings must be kept in mind by the teacher. Zaccaria and Moses (41) have presented several principles for the effective outcome of bibliotherapy. Two of the principles recommended are:

1. Reading should be suggested rather than prescribed.
2. The reading of literature by the individual should be accompanied by or followed up by discussion and counselling.

Interest is perhaps the most significant factor in reading, particularly in voluntary reading. Since individuals differ in their interests, books should be chosen to match their interests. Fader and McNeil (6) have demonstrated that underprivileged and delinquent boys read eagerly when exposed to the kinds of books they were interested in.

Another guiding principle for book selection, which seems to have merit, has been put forth by Jackson (II). She says that children react favorably when the character in the story is of their own age level and also of their own sex.

It seems that the more books the readers have to choose from, the easier it would be for them to select something they want to read. These days most of the books are available in paperback and this can cut down the cost of bibliotherapy.

As suggested above, books should be carefully chosen. The reading should be followed by discussion and other suitable activities to ensure and facilitate the process of bibliotherapy. Ciaciolo (5), Gray (9), Keneally (12), Malkiewicz (18), Newton (22), and Porterfield (25) have discussed that reading followed by dramatization. role-playing, discussion, book reports or book reviews produce self insight, social understanding, and consequently, a positive self concept in the reader. The teacher should not moralize or prescribe a certain behavior for the individual or the class.

Since bibliotherapy deals with mental health, personality growth, attitude change, and emotional adjustment, its use has been recommended by experts in disciplines such as medicine, sociology, education, library science. It may be useful to summarize some views from each discipline.

Doctors and psychiatrists were probably the first to recognize the importance of books in treating mental disorders. Oliver (23) states that the right kind of book may be applied to a mental illness just as a definite drug is applied to some bodily injury. Menninger (19) thinks that books may come to the aid of the doctor and may even precede him. As discussed earlier, the process of identification, catharsis, and insight provides clues for the reader's own adjustment, release of his tension, and shows how he might solve his problems, doctors find bibliotherapy a very useful adjuvant to medical treatment. Gottschalk (8) believes that bibliotherapy stimulates the patient to discuss personal problems, and help him analyze his attitudes and behavior patterns. Smith and Twyeffort (29) suggest that bibliotherapy facilitates treatment.

Sociologists have examined the role of books in teaching values and developing an understanding of human relationships. Lind (14) recommends that books can be used to develop democratic, social, and personal values in children. Strode (32) believes that reading stories can increase an awareness and understanding of human values and relationships.

Educators (2, 26) have recognized the contribution of bibliotherapy to personality adjustment. Recreational reading is said to provide for mental and emotional therapy (15). Witty (40) says that reading programs based on developmental needs can facilitate emotional adjustment. Kircher (13) advocates the use of bibliotherapy with children who have behavioral problems and presents a list of books for this purpose. Bibliotherapy can also be used with gifted children who show maladjustment (36). Weisenburg (38) says that bibliotherapy can be used by the average classroom teacher and deserves a chance in the classroom.

Because of the nature of bibliotherapy the English class provides, perhaps, the best opportunity for reading specially selected books and sharing the understanding of problems faced by individuals in fiction, history, and biography. Burton (4) reports that the English class can provide the adolescent many opportunities to develop a clearer outlook on personal and social problems through reading and discussion.

Librarians, who match people with books, have also shown a great deal of interest in bibliotherapy. A few years ago, the Library Trends published a special issue on bibliotherapy. Recently the American Library Association published a book (I) which examines the broad aspects of bibliotherapy as they relate to hospitals and institutions. It also provides lists of materials which seems to have therapeutic values. Monroe (20) has also compiled and edited a collection of papers

dealing with the role of bibliotherapy in various settings.

The views and opinions of experts about the potential of bibliotherapy have led to many investigations and case studies in different settings. Earlier reports are by Wapple (34), Moore (21), Jackson (10), Lorang (16), Parken (24), Smith (30), and Weingarten (35).

Wapple provides evidence about the social effects of reading. Moore describes many case studies in which bibliotherapy was used effectively. Jackson found that white children developed more favorable attitudes toward the negro race as a result of special reading materials. Lorang's investigation concluded that it was possible to inculcate either good or bad principles through reading. Parken, a judge in the Children's Court in New York, reports the effect of books on delinquent youth. Smith (30) found that 60.7% of the children questioned indicated that they had changed their attitudes as a result of reading. Weingarten studied the effects of reading on character building and concluded that reading can help develop good character traits.

Recent investigations have focused on the effect of bibliotherapy on the change in the reader's attitude. Because of the age of the subjects and the setting involved these investigations have been divided into (i) school setting, and (ii) hospital/prison setting for the convenience of discussion.

School-setting studies

Three of the studies deal with the attitudinal change toward Indians, Eskimos, and Negroes. Fisher (7) examined the change in attitude of fifth grade children toward Indians. He found that reading followed by

discussion produced more significant attitude changes than reading without discussion. Tauran (33) studied the effects of reading on the attitudes of third graders towards Eskimos. His study indicated that attitudes of children were influenced either positively or negatively depending upon the type of material read. Zucaro's study (42) concluded that bibliotherapy was effective in changing the attitudes of suburban school children toward American Negroes in a favorable direction.

Shirley (28) examined the influence of reading on concepts, attitudes, and behavior of 420 adolescents and concluded that 40% changed in attitudes and 15% in behavioral responses.

Stephens (31) investigated the effectiveness of bibliotherapy on the readers' self-reliance and found that the mean differences between the experimental and control group were not statistically significant. However, the differences were in the expected direction.

Hospital/prison-setting studies

Whipple's study (39) shows that reformatory inmates improved in personality functioning as a result of bibliotherapy.

McClasky (17) showed that bibliotherapy was effective in bringing about significant behavior changes in emotionally disturbed patients.

Burt (3) examined the effects of reading and discussion on the attitudes of adult inmates and concluded that bibliotherapy may be a helpful adjuvant to the correctional program for improving attitudes of inmates.

The above review indicates that bibliotherapy, properly and carefully used, with any age level is likely to produce a positive change in the reader's attitudes and self-concept. It can lead to better social and emotional adjustment. Since it is less expensive than psychological

services, the people working with delinquents may include bibliotherapy as a part of their education and rehabilitation programs.

Bibliotherapy would be effective if a large variety of books at different reading levels and appealing to the interests and needs of the readers are provided. There should be freedom of book selection and no pressure for reading. Reading should be followed by discussion to facilitate the interaction between the reader and the character(s) in the book, which is essential for the therapeutic process.

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